

Message Text

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17 15

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-15

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-15 CU-04 MBFR-04 DRC-01 EA-11

NIC-01 SAJ-01 /153 W

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R 271947Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3559

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 25417

E.O.: 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, FR, UR

SUBJ: VISIT OF SOVIET CHIEF OF STAFF TO FRANCE

1. SUMMARY. GENERAL VIKTOR KOULIKOV, CHIEF OF SOVIET GENERAL STAFF, VISITED FRANCE SEPTEMBER 18-25. BOTH FRENCH AND SOVIET OFFICIALS CLAIM VISIT WAS ROUTINE AND THAT KOULIKOV DID NOT DEAL WITH QUESTIONS OF SUBSTANCE. END SUMMARY.

2. KLULIKOV'S ARRIVAL SEPTEMBER 18 WAS ANNOUNCED HERE ON THE 13TH, AND RECEIVED LOW-KEY PRESS TREATMENT. HE WAS MET AT LE BOURGET BY HIS HOST, GENERAL MAURIN, WITH WHOM, ACCORDING TO L'AURE AND LE FIGARO, HE HAD DISCUSSION ON RELATIONS BETWEEN FRENCH AND SOVIET ARMED FORCES AND SPORT AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES. ON THE 19TH, KOULIKOV SAW MINISTER OF ARMED FORCES GALLEY. HE THEN DEPARTED FOR TOUR IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE. ON HIS SCHEDULE WAS THE ARMOR TRAINING CENTER AT CARPIAGNE, AN AIR ACROBATIC EXHIBITION AT THE AIR SCHOOL AT SALON-DE-PROVENCE ON THE 20TH; A DEMONSTRATION OF HELICOPTERS AT THE MARIGNANE FACTORY AND TEST CENTER AT ISTRES, AND DINNER BY GENERAL MATHON, COMMANDANT

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OF THE 7TH MILITARY REGION, ON THE 21ST; A VISIT TO NICE AND

CANNES ON THE 22ND; AND A TOUR OF THE NAVAL ACADEMY AT BREST AND THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER "FOCH" ON THE 24TH.

3. UPON KOULIKOV'S DEPARTURE THE 25TH, GENERAL MAURIN CHARACTERIZED THE VISIT AS AN "IMPORTANT EVENT IN THE PROGRAM OF EXCHANGES BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES OF ARMED FORCES OF THE TWO COUNTRIES." ACCORDING TO AFP, GENERAL MAURIN TOLD A TASS CORRESPONDENT THAT HE HAD ACCEPTED KOULIKOV'S INVITATION FOR A RETURN VISIT TO THE USSR IN 1974.

4. KOULIKOV WAS ACCOMPANIED BY GENERAL SEMEN FEDOROVICH ROMANOV, DEPUTY CHIEF OF THE GENERAL DIRECTORATE OF THE GENERAL STAFF, GENERAL ALEKSANDR N. MEDVEDEV, DEPUTY CHIEF OF THE AIR FORCE STAFF, AND REAR ADMIRAL PIOTR V. KORETSKIY OF THE NAVAL STAFF.

5. DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR EAST EUROPE OMNES TOLD EMBOFF SEPTEMBER 24 THAT VISIT WAS PART OF TWO-YEAR PLAN OF EXCHANGES AND WAS BASICALLY OF A CEREMONIAL NATURE (ELYSEE DIP. ADVISOR RAIMOND CONFIRMED FOREGOING TO POL. COUNS. SEPT. 27) WHILE OMNES HAD NOT SEEN MEMCONS OF CONVERSATION WITH GALLEY, HE SAID HE WOULD BE SURPRISED IF ANY QUESTIONS OF SUBSTANCE HAD BEEN DISCUSSED. ALTHOUGH VISIT HAD BEEN SCHEDULED FOR SOME TIME, OMNES ACKNOWLEDGED THAT TIMING NOT ONLY BALANCED POMPIDOU TRIP TO CHIN BUT GALLEY VISIT TO US AS WELL.

6. IN DISCUSSING VISIT SEPTEMBER 17 WITH CHIEF OF INTELLIGENCE, ARMED FORCES STAFF, DATT WAS TOLD THAT GEN MAURIN WANTED HIM TO KNOW VISIT WAS NOTHING SPECIAL AND WAS ROUTINE PART OF EXCHANGE PROGRAM AGREED UPON WHEN GECHKO WAS IN FRANCE LAST YEAR.

7. DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF, FRENCH AIR FORCE, GENERAL GIRAUD, MADE A POINT DURING LUNCHEON WITH AIRA TO TELL AIRA THAT KOULIKOV VISIT WAS CONTINUATION OF EXCHANGE BETWEEN FRENCH-SOV MILITARY. GIRAUD SAID WE COULD EXPECT TO SEE GENERAL MAURIN MAKE A SIMILAR RETURN VISIT TO SOVIET UNION IN SPRING OR SUMMER OF 1974.

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8. SOVIET EMBASSY OFFICERS ALSO DOWNPLAYED SIGNIFICANCE OF VISIT. FIRST SECRETARY MATVEYEVSKIY TOLD EMBOFF SEPTEMBER 21 THAT VISIT WAS ROUTINE AND THAT HE BELIEVED EXCHANGES OF MILITARY CULTURAL AND SPORTS GROUPS WAS MAIN ITEM ON AGENDA. SOVIET COUNSELOR STUPICHIN TOOK SAME GENERAL LINE WITH POL COUNS ON SEPTEMBER 25. IN PARTICULAR, HE HELD IT HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT KOULIKOV HAD GOTTEN INTO POLITICAL SUBJECTS SUCH AS MBFR AND

CSCE.

9. COMMENT: WHILE WE ARE INCLINED TO TAKE FRENCH AND SOVIET COMMENTS AT FACE VALUE, WE THINK IT IS LIKELY THAT KOULIKOV'S TALK WITH GALLEY COVERED MORE THAN JUST SPORT AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES. IN PARTICULAR, THE SOVIETS MAY HAVE TRIED TO GET A READING ON FRENCH IMPRESSIONS OF CHINESE ATTITUDES IN THE WAKE OF POMPIDOU'S TRIP.

GDS.

IRWIN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, MILITARY VISITS, CULTURAL EXCHANGES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 27 SEP 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973PARIS25417
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS IRWIN
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: PARIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t1973096/aaaaaefi.tel
Line Count: 125
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 AUG 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <24-Aug-2001 by shawdg>; APPROVED <15-Nov-2001 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VISIT OF SOVIET CHIEF OF STAFF TO FRANCE
TAGS: PFOR, FR, UR, (KOULIKOV, VIKTOR)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005